

## Chester U3A Annual Report - 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2010 - Jenny Carley

This year has been busy and fulfilling one although sometimes exasperating. I think I now know what it's all about. The committee started with five members retiring replaced by four newly elected members, there was also a vacancy for a co-opted member.

Before the New Year began Ken Davey resigned from the committee as joint News Sheet editor due to family commitments. Barbara Ginty volunteered to take his place, at the same time Pam Spencer agreed to look after the Brochures. There were still two vacancies on the committee until March, when Maureen Walsh resigned due to other commitments. Our committee was now much reduced with Gordon Bowyer filling two posts, that of vice chair and Group Liaison.

Constant pleas for help eventually succeeded when in May two members Ken Bramham and Sheila Young come forward. Ken took on responsibility for the News Sheet e-mail distribution list and Sheila was assigned special projects. In June Shirley Webster became custodian of the Trade List which has proved very popular.

Membership at the last AGM was 689, an increase of 3%. Membership has now reached 732 which is an increase of another 6%. Although membership has increased, the numbers attending the Tuesday meeting has fallen slightly, while attendance at the Thursday meeting has increased.

The Third Age Trust increased their capitation by £1 in April this year. At our SGM in July the membership fee for 2010-11 was increased to reflect this increase. At the same time, we made a change to the constitution removing the limit of co-opted members on the committee.

Our groups continue to flourish. Thanks to all the co-ordinators, all 60+ of them who do a brilliant job. We had the privilege of seeing some of their work at the Group Road Show last November. There were 12 groups, Social, 2x Creative Writing, Craft, Tapestry, Family History, 2x Birds, Heraldry, Photography, Poetry, Scribblers, Painting, Wildflowers, and Collectors. It was so successful that we are to repeat the event later this month. This year we will have additional exhibition stands which were acquired by Andrew Cross.

To show our appreciation to our co-ordinators for the excellent work they do, a co-coordinators lunch was held at the Quaker meeting house in September. A questionnaire was completed by those present which gave invaluable feedback to the committee, the results of which will be acted upon in the coming year. It was also voted that we would produce a Magazine type publication next year to promote group activity.

Only one new group was started this year, Canasta initiated by Brenda Wall in February. The group has members from Cestrian and Chester U3A - as do Local History and Ballroom dancing, using the advantage of Network membership. Unfortunately the Poetry group closed as Kay Naylor moved down south, and the beginners bridge group also closed as their expertise developed beyond beginners. There were also events organised by the groups themselves, including holidays for the Strollers, Birdwatching and Friday walkers.

As a special project Sheila Young compiled a list of National office DVDs, so that co-ordinators and members could view resources prior to registering with National Office and the Resource centre. Sheila is custodian of the list and will assist members who experience difficulty accessing the web site.

Janet Money continues to promote strong links with Bishops High School (BHS). The Popular Science day in February was attended by over 40 members, too many for a classroom. So this month we used the Lecture Theatre, and attendance has risen to above 50.

In February Mike Money talked about our brains and Godfrey Harrap about our genes. In October Brian Holyoak talked about the geology of Yellowstone Park and June Hargreaves explained the science of birds. There was no computer course, as BHS was undergoing refurbishment, so to replace it Andrew Cross did a demonstration on Photographic applications at a Thursday meeting.

The embarrassment at a Tuesday meeting when the speaker, Swasie Turner's presentation failed on our computer initiated a review of our equipment carried out by Gordon and Andrew. This became more urgent when Alan Coulson reported that the projector he was using for the film group was failing on a regular basis. We have now upgraded our computers and replaced our projectors, using the surplus monies on deposit.

At the Tuesday meetings Brian Holyoak continues to supply us with interesting speakers, from 'How to become a true Brit' to 'Surgery at the battle of Waterloo'. This year Myra Bowyer has taken over the organisation of the Thursday meetings, and judging by the increased attendance is doing an excellent job. The events at the Thursday meetings have varied from participation in a Tai Chi demonstration to Frances Langman who brought guide dogs into the meeting.

Deeside and Wirral Network has developed into a useful resource this year. There is an enthusiastic chairman and willingness on the part of the members to share their knowledge and support the newer U3As. We used the Network to find independent judges for the Roy Wilson prize for Creative writing, something we re-introduced this year. The winner will be announced after this AGM. Chester U3A has contributed specifically by producing a web site for the Network and has assisted Bromborough and Bebbington U3As in their application for Gift Aid.

Our members attended several events organised by 'The North West Region'. Early in the year, a Cultural day in Liverpool and a visit to Jodrell Bank were attended by our members. I attended the AGM in Preston with two of our members on your behalf.

In January the New Year lunch was attended by 100 members at Rossett Hall. 'Sunday at 7' continues to be as successful as ever.

Our social committee has worked especially diligently over the past year. This year Elizabeth Flanagan and Kay Lunt joined the team. They have organised approx 21 day trips including a tour of Shrewsbury, The BBC tour, Southport flower show and Stockport Air raid shelters; approx. 18 lunches at places like Adelphi and College Bistro; approx. 18 Theatre/Concerts to Manchester and Liverpool and holidays to Spain and Derbyshire. Is this a record!

Even in this electronic age the News-Sheet continues to be the basic form of communication. It has recently been having a face lift thanks to Barbara and Tom.

The web site continues to be maintained impeccably by John Hammond. It has been improved both in content and appearance. Although many of our members visit the site more of you should do so. It is the envy of many of the U3As in the Network.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the committee for their contribution to the running of Chester U3A and the support they have given me especially Gordon whose support and experience has been invaluable.

My thanks go to all the people who help make the meetings such a success,

those who organise the Tuesday and Thursday meetings,

those that put out chairs and those that put them away,

those who work behind the scenes collecting keys opening up the hall and

those providing the visual and audio aids,

those who maintain the notice boards, not forgetting the coffee makers and the clicker man,

then there's the welcoming committee, and the help desk team.

The co-ordinators who work so hard, it's not an easy job, but I hope an enjoyable and fulfilling one,

and at the group meetings there's the deputy co-ordinators, the tea makers, the car sharers, and the programme organisers.

Those who contribute and organise the group fair and the co-ordinators lunch.

There are custodians of our information, the equipment, trade lists and resource listings and of course our web site.

The organisers and speakers at the popular science lectures must not be forgotten.

And the social team, who have organised about 60 events this year in addition to those who organise the New Year lunch and 'Sunday at 7'.

Those who ensure that we communicate efficiently; the news sheet editors; the printers and distributors and brochure producers.

There are so many helpers and volunteers, we are all volunteers and we all help each other, that is the ethos of the U3A.

Thank you to anyone I may have missed and a big Thank You to you all whatever part you play in our activities.

I would like to take this opportunity to re-enforce the ethos of the U3A. We are a self-help organisation to provide educational, creative and leisure opportunities in a friendly environment. We draw upon the knowledge, experience and skills of our own members to organise and provide study/interest groups in accordance with the wishes of the membership. The teachers learn and the learners teach.

I will still be asking for 'Helpers' and 'Volunteers' in the coming year because I believe that each member, by making a contribution however small, will benefit themselves and the organisation.

Jenny Carley